

**SOPN Technical Committee Meeting
Via Teleconference December 6, 2004
10:00 AM Mountain Time, 11:00 AM Central Time
Meeting Minutes**

Technical Committee Members Attending: Alden Miller (WABA) - Chair of Technical Committee, Paul Eubank (LAMR), Steve Burrough (CHIC), Karl Zimmerman (BEOL, representing for Fran Pannebaker), Brian Carey (LYJO), Brian Quigley (CAVO), Felix Revello (FOLS), Daniel Jacobs (PECO), Mitzi Frank (FOUN, representing Ruben Andrade), Alexa Roberts (SAND), Dusty Perkins (SOPN), Other Staff Attendees: Heidi Sosinski (SOPN), Marten Schmitz (PECO), Gillian Bowser (Gulf Coast CESU), Maggie Johnston (CAVO), Jason Lott (LYJO).

Major Action Items

- A. Develop/review/approve conceptual model workshop agenda.
- B. Review/approve staffing plan.
- C. Review vegetation mapping status.

Meeting began at 11:00 AM CST.

I. SOPN progress since August Annual Meeting

A) Proposals

- 1.) CCI 05 Restoration Proposal – Fund source eliminated
- 2.) CCI 06 Restoration Proposal– Fund source eliminated
- 3.) NRPP Natural Resource Management Restoration Proposal – IMR decision in Dec.
- 4.) NRPP Small Park – SAND Rare Species Inventory – IMR decision in Dec.
- 5.) Rocky Mountain CESU – SAND Rare Plant Inventory – Due January 14
- 6.) Rocky Mountain CESU – Grazing as Mngt Tool in NPS Units Workshop, Assisting

SAND – Due January 14. A. Roberts gave a brief overview of this project proposal. Several parks expressed an interested in this Grazing workshop. G. Bowser also suggested interacting/collaborating with LYJO on their ranching heritage project. **Action Item – After proposal is developed, A. Roberts will circulate for Technical Committee comments.**

7.) National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – This fund source requires a 2:1 non-federal match. Potential matching funds for SOPN are estimated at about \$75,000. D. Perkins recommended not submitting this proposal as there would not be enough to go around to each of the 7 parks to accomplish restoration. Technical Committee Agreed.

B) Riverine / Reservoir Conceptual Models – Sue Braumiller will be developing these two models at a cost of approximately \$13,000, considerable savings over the \$36,000 proposal from Texas State.

C) Status of Inventories (Status of SOPN Biological Inventories Projects.doc) - Recently received vertebrate final reports from The Nature Conservancy for LAMR and LYJO. The LAMR plant report and some additional data entry by The Nature Conservancy should be completed by Christmas. Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory (Hoagland) is reviewing comments from SOPN on the WABA plant report, final report should be completed by Christmas. The WABA bird inventory, which was funded by WABA and not SOPN has received a no-cost extension until December 31. Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory (Kelly) is reviewing SOPN and CHIC comments on the vertebrate final report and should be wrapping up soon.

D) NPSpecies Certification – H. Sosinski gave an overview of progress to date. SOPN is considering establishing a cooperative agreement with individuals with knowledge of the flora and fauna in the parks. In some cases this may be the people who did the inventories for us. For parks with small number of records this may result in a considerable cost savings when compared to certification workshops. Some Technical Committee members expressed some reservations about this arrangement in that it would not provide an unbiased eye to review the data. We are in a unique situation in that we are small parks with a limited number of people who are aware of the species present at each park. H. Sosinski will continue to work on a more defined plan that will then be presented to the technical committee for review.

E) Technical Committee Chair Agreement – This agreement was passed by the board in October.

F) Grant Writing Class – SOPN is still in the running to host a Kathy Jope workshop, either in Austin/College Station area or BEOL. D. Perkins had contacted Larissa Read (IMR) in November and a decision about where to host this workshop had not yet been made.

G) Texas A+M Interns – SOPN has one intern in place, and the potential for a second. The arrangement has worked well so far.

H) WASO I+M Update

1.) Natural Resource Challenge requested a 4.6 million increase for FY05 and received a 3.6 million increase. No firm plans have been made, but B. Bingham told SOPN on the morning prior to the meeting that SOPN is still set to receive its' full vital signs budget (\$389,000) and full water quality budget (\$29,000) in FY05.

2.) WASO I+M is also now recommending that the network coordinators be supervised by the regional coordinator as opposed to staff at individual parks. This is currently not a requirement, but may be in the future. This recommendation is based on details from other networks where parks have made spent I+M resources on non-I+M goals. In some cases this has been done without consulting the network or regional I+M coordinator.

II. Staffing Plan

A) B. Carey presented the staffing plan for SOPN through 2008. The sub-committee (B. Carey, G. Bowser, and D. Perkins) focused on the needs of the network over actual logistics and cost feasibility. In order to fill the staffing plan we would need a much larger budget than is planned. This plan emphasizes the need for the network to look for creative ways to fill these needs (shared positions, cooperative agreements, etc.). The sub-committee also debated hiring a permanent ecologist versus a term ecologist versus a graduate student. There is a need for additional personnel, but also a desire to remain flexible. The sub-committee recommended establishing two cooperative agreements for Ph.D. students, one at Texas A+M and one at University of Colorado. The agreement at Colorado will take advantage of the university contributing 9 months of the student assistantship, with SOPN paying for 3 months. This arrangement will cost SOPN approximately \$41,000 at Texas A+M and \$18,000 at University of Colorado. This will still be cheaper than hiring a permanent ecologist and will not permanently tie up funding. The student will be finished at the same time our Phase III report is completed which will enable SOPN to cater its future hires specifically to the needs of the approved monitoring plant. **Action Item: The Technical Committee approved the staffing plan as presented with the addition of the assistantship at University of Colorado. The plan will be forwarded to the Board for final approval.**

III. Conceptual Model Workshops

A) The agenda for the workshop was reviewed.

-Recommendation was made to have experienced facilitators on hand. Several suggestions were discussed. Lisa Thomas (I+M), the Denver Service Center, Texas A+M, River and Trails Program were all possibilities. G. Bowser will contact A+M and D. Perkins will contact the others. **Action Item: The technical committee approved the agenda for the workshop. The technical committee decided to let D. Perkins make the final decision regarding facilitators for the workshop.**

B) Subject Matter Experts

1.) A list of potential experts was presented. **Action Item: The following were suggested as high priority to invite Roy Roath (Colorado State), Mark Simmons (Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center), Kristine Johnson (Natural Heritage New Mexico), John Blair (Kansas State, Konza Prairie), Tat Smith (Texas A+M) Linda Wallace (Oklahoma State), Russ Hoff (NRCS), Ben Berlinger (NRCS), Pam Benjamin (NPS), Lonnie Fehrenbachner (NRCS), Whoever we use as an advisor at Texas A+M for the graduate student, Dr. Lee (M. Johnston will get his affiliation) / someone from the Exotic Plant Management Teams / someone with exotic plant expertise, woody invasion of grasslands expert, and someone with agronomy and soils expertise. The technical committee also decided to pay for travel but not for an honorarium. The technical committee gave D.**

Perkins the authorization to take these priorities into consideration and make any additional invitations if necessary.

2.) Action Item: CHIC was selected as the tentative location for the next conceptual model meeting to take place sometime April-June.

C) Freshwater Wetland Conceptual Model – The development of this model was discussed. G. Bowser thought one had been completed for BEOL. D. Perkins will check on this as well as models from other I+M networks, and a decision will be made at a later date.

IV. Vegetation Mapping

A) The vegetation mapping proposal that was sent to the national mapping program was reviewed. CAVO had a digitized map from the 1970's and a weed map (2004) that was not on the list.

B) D. Perkins will inform the technical committee when he hears from the national mapping program.

V. Upcoming Projects – Brief Details of Upcoming Projects were Presented

A) Get PI for SAND plant inventory – combine with vegetation mapping?

B) Get PI for BEOL wetland inventory – combine with vegetation mapping or freshwater wetland conceptual model? (BEOL, PECO, SAND, FOLS, CHIC, LAMR)

C) Finalize FY2005 Workplan – Due in January 31 to WASO

D) Strategic Plan, draft due in January per BOD decision at annual meeting

E) Eastern Deciduous/ Pinion Juniper models

Adjourned: 1:45 PM CST.